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A. S. WATSON & CO., LIMITED.

THE HONGKONG DISPENSARY.

Established A.D. 1841.

Hongkong, 12th August, 1895.

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Only communications relating to the news columns should be addressed to THE EDITOR.

Correspondents must forward their names and address with communications addressed to the Editor, and for publication, but as evidence of good faith.

All letters for publication should be written on one side of the paper only.

No anonymous signed communications that have already appeared in other papers will be inserted.

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HONGKONG, OCTOBER 18TH, 1895.

In the early part of 1893 a proposal was made that in the Kwangtung province lekin should be paid on foreign goods at the same time as the import duty and that the goods should thereupon be free from all further taxation. The objection to the course proposed was that it would be equivalent to an increase of the import duty without any certainty that squeezing after the goods left the Customs sheds would not go on much the same as before. In reply to this the case of the Opium Convention was adduced, absolute immunity from additional taxation having been secured by that agreement for opium, which now pays a fixed lekin due at the same time as the import duty. The idea of applying the same system to the import trade generally did not commend itself, however, to commercial circles and the proposal came to nothing. It has now been revived by the writer of a contributed article in the *China Mail*, who amplifies it, and suggests that in consideration of an increase of the import tariff foreign goods should be exempted from inland taxation and that China should agree to open up new ports and trade routes, more particularly the West River. There is much to be said in favour of the proposal, provided reliance could be placed on the honesty of the Chinese Government and its provincial officers. But the Government and its officers are not honest. It is true the Opium Agreement has worked with satisfactory results, but strong pressure has been required to keep the Chinese up to the mark. In 1890 a determined attempt was made to levy additional duty at Canton, and again at Shanghai, quite recently, another attempt has been made. These attempts were frustrated, but it is not absolutely certain that in the remote interior illegal squeezing is not levied on opium without ever being heard of by foreigners. To all outward seeming, however, the agreement is duly carried out. The reason is not far to seek: it is not duly carried out to the agreement becomes at once null and void and the Chinese Government loses the very substantial advantages it enjoys thereunder. Peking therefore in this case keeps a tight hand on the provincial authorities, not as a matter of common honesty, but because it pays.

The case of opium cannot be taken as establishing the contention that a similar agreement applied to foreign goods in general would work with equal satisfaction. A four-hand is more difficult to drive than a one horse, and there is a limit to the number of horses that even the most expert driver can manage. Attempts have been made to evade any agreement for the exemption from squeezing of foreign trade in general if squeeze stations were still allowed to exist; and as the right of the Chinese Government to tax as it thinks fit native trade carried in native bottoms cannot be called in question

an agreement for the exemption from squeezing of foreign goods would not of itself bring about the abolition of the squeeze stations. But as long as the squeeze stations existed, the Chinese would be likely to levy squeeze on foreign goods as well as native, and the number of complaints that would reach the Legations at Peking of petty squeezes would probably be so great as to overwhelm the correspondence office, to say nothing of the Minister in his negotiations with the Taung Yamen. It is possible to keep a more or less effective watch on one important article of trade like opium; it would be quite a different thing to keep a watch on the hundred and one other articles that go to make up the total foreign import trade.

Foreign merchants would probably not object to a reasonable revision of the tariff in return for increased trading privileges, including the opening of new ports and the privilege of running steamers on the inland waterways, provided the squeeze system were entirely swept away. So long as that system is maintained all that can be done with the Chinese Government is to bring pressure to bear upon it to grant increased trading facilities without according it the right to levy increased duties. The preliminary step to tariff revision, if there is to be any, must be that the entire squeezing of the squeeze system and the substitution in its place of some honest machinery for collecting the dues of the Imperial and provincial Governments. The contributor to our evening contemporary writes as though lekin were a legitimate and fixed charge, whereas there is no fixity about it; it is a squeeze, forced out in many cases, and from which the farmers try to make all they can. Goods in some cases will make detours of hundreds of miles in order to find a route where the squeeze is less onerous than on the most direct route, the stations on the different routes competing with each other for the traffic, but in such a way that the competition brings little advantage to trade, for it is simply a question between paying high squeezes or incurring the cost of carrying the goods by roundabout routes. There is a good deal that is sensible in the article under notice, but likewise a certain amount of pure nonsense, as, for instance, where the writer says "The Chambers of Commerce should also propose to compensate for the loss of lekin by agreeing to the prepayment of transit duties on imports on entry at the port." That is precisely what is provided for in the treaties and what the Chambers of Commerce would like to see enforced, but the Canton Government refuses absolutely to have anything to do with the transit pass system.

We are also told that "With much unrestrained Foreign Powers continue to clamour for the opening up of China or for additional ports, which means to the treaty-tied Chinese the surrender of much-needed revenue without obtaining any compensation in return." Such as tariff adjustment, or other equivalent, to enable China to improve her income and meet her increasing financial obligations. Poor treaty-tied Chinese! They fatuously plunge in every battle, have a large indemnity to pay, and then think themselves hardly used because foreigners object to the amount being raised by squeeze on foreign trade. The writer seems to think that China should be treated on the same terms as Japan, which is allowed to levy ten percent duties. But the fiscal administration of Japan is honest and there is no question of squeezing. "Squeezing," says the writer, "the Powers have, under the new Treaty, assented to a ten per cent. duty on cottons and woollens imported into Japan without claiming any commercial equivalent in exchange, so should say it would be 'worth granting a similar concession for such advantages as the opening of the West River to British trade.' As a matter of fact, in the Kwangtung province cases have been verified in which goods which ought to have been entirely cleared by the payment of import duty and the transit duty, that is, seven and a half per cent. in all, have had to pay charges totalling fifteen per cent. It would certainly pay the foreign merchant very much better to pay ten per cent. at the port of entry if he could thereby secure the goods against further squeezing, but he is not likely to assent to any increase of the import duty so long as the squeeze system continues in force. The opening of the West River is a demand which may be legitimately insisted upon, and enforced without reference to any question of increased import duties. Let China set her financial house in order and place the collection of her internal revenues under the direction of the Foreign Customs or some special service under foreign control, and then the Powers may be found willing to entertain proposals for tariff revision.

The *China Mail* says that the German and French Consuls at Peking, who are appointed to the new Vice-Consulate at Tientsin, will give an afternoon performance at four o'clock and another in the evening at nine.

The N. D. E. steamer *Princess Alice*, carrying the German mail with dates from Berlin of the 23rd September, left Singapore the 17th inst. at 11 a.m., and may be expected here on or about Monday evening, 24th inst.

From the *Corriere d'Oriente* we learn that M. Gauthier, the French Consul at Peking, has been appointed to the new Vice-Consulate at Tientsin. M. Gauthier has been under him two Chambers of Commerce at Peking and one at Tientsin, so that he will be able to move between the two posts. The Vice-Consulate at Tientsin has been established, we presume, under the terms of the new treaty between France and China. It is said the treaty has not been ratified, but evidently it is being acted upon.

The British steamer *Stirling*, Capt. Murphy, reports that whilst on the voyage from Swatow to Saigon in Oct. 1895, N. 114 E. she sighted a damaged junk and towed her on board and picked up the crew of two Chinese in a very exhausted condition. They hailed from Chin-chai and had been drifting for eight days, having been caught in the typhoon on the 26th ult. when the junk had been completely gutted out. When rescued they had been three days without water, and had nearly starved. They were kindly taken care of by Captain Murphy, and on arrival in Swatow, Messrs. Brown, Allen, Messrs. Bradley & Co. agents, placed a subscription among the resident Chinese, which will enable them to be forwarded to their homes. They are at present on board the *Stirling* and will probably be sent on from Hongkong. The junk was set on fire and scuttled.

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H.M.S. *Dolphin*, yesterday from Swatow. According to a Madrid telegram, the Spanish steamer *Don Juan*, which was captured by the Japanese, has been released and is on her way to Manila. The steamer was captured by the Japanese on the 15th inst. and was taken to Manila. The Japanese government has announced that the steamer has been released and is on her way to Manila.

In the Manila Government Gazette, there is a notice regarding the Spanish steamer *Don Juan*, which was captured by the Japanese, and has been released. The notice states that the steamer was captured by the Japanese on the 15th inst. and was taken to Manila. The Japanese government has announced that the steamer has been released and is on her way to Manila.

Disastrous Explosion On A Chinese Trooper. Many Wounded. (Special Telegram to the "Daily Press.") SHANGHAI, 17th October, 9.45 pm. The Chinese Merchants Company have received a telegram stating that an explosion has occurred on the steamer *Kungai* and that the fore part of the vessel was blown out. Many persons were wounded.

REUTERS' TELEGRAMS. (Supplied to the "Daily Press.") TURKEY AND THE POWERS. The Sultan accepts the American reform principle, but declines to put them in force at the moment because it would appear that he was yielding to pressure. Under these circumstances the outlook is considered as more hopeful in Constantinople.

THE NEW GRAND VIZIER FRIENDLY TO ENGLAND. LONDON, 4th October. Kaimul Pasha, who is reported to be an exceedingly able man, and as Anglophile, has been named Grand Vizier.

THE JAPANESE IN FORMOSA. LATEST DETAILS. As already reported, the Japanese men-of-war began to leave Kelung on the 4th inst. and assembled at the Pescadores. Early on the morning of the 10th one division of transports left for Pusan, on the coast near Kago, and the other division left for the coast near Taku. The sea was quite smooth and the trip to the south division effected their landing without difficulty on the 12th. Some afternoon before fighting took place with the rebels, but since then the branch of the army has had only skirmishes. One part of the south division landed at Tungkow, and having found the big stream there, was marching towards Fungshan and Chigo.

Takow was bombarded by the fleet early on the morning of the 12th. By eight o'clock the firing had ceased, it is believed because the forts had fallen. Troops will be landed there, and unless this has been timely rendered before this it was expected he would have a most unpleasant experience yesterday or to-day.

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY'S CONCERT. On Wednesday evening a most enjoyable concert was given at the Mount Austin Hotel in aid of the funds of the Hongkong Benevolent Society. There was a very fair audience, which, however, would probably have been larger had the concert been published in advance. The entertainment has been announced simply as a ballad concert, and outside the acquaintance of those more immediately interested it was not generally known who the performers were to be, or whether the concert was likely to prove attractive or otherwise. However, those who attended were richly rewarded and those who stayed away missed a very good thing.

The feature of the evening was Mrs. Vallance's "O' Whistle 'Till I Come to You." Mrs. Vallance, who was not previously acquainted in public in Hongkong, possessed a sweet, flexible soprano voice, which she used perfectly, and her singing of the charming ballad elicited an enthusiastic ovation, to which she responded with a very graceful and repeated "O' Whistle 'Till I Come to You." Mrs. Vallance's performance was a most successful one, and she was warmly applauded by the audience.

SIX MONTHS AMONG THE PIRATES. LATEST DETAILS. THE EXPERIENCES OF HIMSELF AND FAMILY. The *Corriere d'Oriente* of the 14th October publishes the report of an interview with a man who claims to have been a pirate for six months. The man, who is named as "John," was captured by the British navy and is now in the hands of the British authorities. He has given a detailed account of his experiences as a pirate, and has also mentioned the names of several other pirates who were with him.

THE MURDER OF A NORWEGIAN SEAMAN. At the Magistrate's yesterday before Mr. T. Scoble Smith, A. Kan and Small-pocked Sam were charged on remand with the murder of a Norwegian seaman, who was named as "John." The case is being tried at the Magistrate's, and the accused are being held in custody.

CRICKET. OFFICERS: RIFLE BRIGADE. OFFICERS OF THE GARRISON. This match was played yesterday and resulted in a draw. It is a pity that the match was not played on a different day, as the weather was very hot and the ground was very dry.

HONGKONG LIFE ASSOCIATION. Twenty-three members completed for the Short Course Club last Saturday. The club was very successful in its efforts to raise funds for the association, and the members were very active in their work.

FOOTBALL. HONGKONG FOOTBALL CLUB v. G. COMPANY. The match was played yesterday and resulted in a draw. It was a very interesting match, and the players were very active.

THE JAPANESE IN FORMOSA. LATEST DETAILS. The Japanese army has been very successful in its operations in Formosa, and has captured several towns. The Japanese government has announced that the army has been ordered to advance further into the interior of the island.

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY'S CONCERT. The concert was very successful, and the audience was very large. The performers were very good, and the music was very well played. The concert was a most enjoyable evening, and the funds of the society have been increased by a large amount.

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THE JAPANESE NAVY. The following letter appears in the *Speculator*:—Your article on Far Eastern topics has received much attention in Japan, and has been followed with deep interest. While, however, the breadth of view displayed in the article is much appreciated, and the accuracy of the writer of the article has differed from the majority of English newspaper and magazine writers, who seem to be mainly concerned in the question of Japan's strength, the article is not one calling for censure. For, unless corrected, the English public will be misled in its estimate of the Japanese navy, and will be misled in its estimate of the Japanese navy, and will be misled in its estimate of the Japanese navy.

